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THE COPTIC PSALTER¹

Among the manuscript treasures recently purchased in Egypt by Mr. Freer were numerous fragments of books written in the Coptic language. They were in such condition that only by dint of great care and industry could the parchment leaves be separated and reduced to order. Professor Worrell, to whom the task of decipherment was intrusted, was fortunate in having the expert assistance of Professor Sanders in this preliminary task.

Some of the more considerable fragments proved to contain portions of the Bible in the Sahidic dialect, and it is these which are included in the present publication. The portions are the following: Pss. 7-52; 43:25-44:7, from another MS; Job 24:19-27:19. The volume is thus practically an edition of a considerable part of the Psalter, as its title indicates. A second volume is to contain the rest of the decipherable material in the collection, namely, part of a homily on the Virgin, and a magical text in the Bohairic dialect.

A new text of the Sahidic Psalter is very welcome, even after the publications of Budge and Rahlfs. The Freer MS gives no new readings of critical importance, but some of its orthographic variations are interesting, and the care with which it is here reproduced and collated, by the help of Mr. Crum, with the London MS edited by Budge, makes it a valuable starting-point for further study. Professor Worrell has been able incidentally to correct more than sixty mistakes in this portion of the Budge edition.

The remarks on the paleography of the MS in the Introduction, pp. xv-xviii, though brief, are of considerable significance. It certainly seems to be the case that one and the same hand wrote the whole Psalter MS, changing for no apparent reason from the "round" to the "square" forms of the variable letters, and then back again. The whole subject of early Coptic writing needs to have much new light shed upon it. The editor's conclusion as to the date of this MS is that it is hardly earlier than the fifth or later than the seventh century.

The font of type used was specially prepared for this edition, with the main purpose of reproducing the *ductus* of the MS characters. The result is quite satisfactory, and the printed page has a very pleasing

¹ University of Michigan Studies: Humanistic Series, Vol. X. *The Coptic Manuscripts in the Freer Collection*. By Professor William H. Worrell, Hartford Seminary Foundation. Part I. A Fragment of a Psalter in the Sahidic Dialect. New York: Macmillan, 1916. xxvi+112 pages, with 6 facsimile plates. \$2.00 net.

appearance, in spite of the inelegant form of a few of the letters, notably *hori* and *shima*.

Professor Worrell, the general editors of these "Studies," and the public-spirited owner of the MSS are alike to be congratulated on this publication.

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THE TRIAL OF JESUS

The author of the latest work on the trial of Jesus¹ is professor of classical languages at Dartmouth College, and was led to his task through a study of Roman criminal procedure, particularly in connection with Cicero's case against Verres. His conclusions are as follows:

The only "trial" of Jesus, properly so called, was the process before Pilate. The proceedings of the Sanhedrin were no true trial, for this body after the coming of the procurators had lost all criminal jurisdiction, except perhaps in petty cases. It had, however, a certain status in Roman law, for it was permitted to exercise inquisitorial powers not unlike those of a modern grand jury, with the right to make arrests, summon witnesses, etc., in order to prepare information to be laid before the procurator. A similar function in Egypt was fulfilled by certain native officials called "strategi," as is shown by the papyri.

The arrest of Jesus by the Temple police was consequently perfectly regular and valid. While waiting for the Sanhedrin to assemble he was brought before Annas, who questioned him, but this interrogatory had no judicial significance. There was only one session of the Sanhedrin, at morning, and the account of the night session in Mark and Matthew is an error. No exceptions can be taken to the actions of the Sanhedrin. As it was not sitting as a true court, the Mishnic rules for its practice were irrelevant, even if they were in existence. By the testimony of witnesses and the confession of the accused the Sanhedrin found that Jesus had made messianic claims and these claims were the basis of the indictment submitted to the procurator. The question of blasphemy did not and could not arise, for messianic claims were not "blasphemy"; the gospel tradition is due to the influence of later events.

Pilate acted in accord with all proper forms, as far as they can be known for the Roman provinces. His reluctance to pass sentence is

¹ *The Prosecution of Jesus: Its Date, History and Legality*. By Richard Wellington Husband. Princeton: University Press, 1916. viii+302 pages. \$1.50.